

Scientists discover 200 new species in remote PNG

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A pink-eyed Caedicia, one of the 42 individuals of the leaf katydids found by scientists in September, 2009. Scientists on October 6, 2010 unveiled a spectacular array of more than 200 new species discovered in the Pacific highlands of Papua New Guinea.

Scientists Wednesday unveiled a spectacular array of more than 200 new species discovered in the Pacific islands of Papua New Guinea, including a white-tailed mouse and a tiny, long-snouted frog.

The survey of remote New Britain island and the Southern Highlands ranges, accessible only by a combination of small plane, dinghy, helicopter and foot, found an exciting range of new mammals, amphibians, insects and plants.

"To find a completely new genus of mammal in this day and age is pretty

cool," said lead researcher Steve Richards of the new mouse [species](#) discovery.

"I mean, people have heard of birds of paradise and tree-climbing kangaroos and stuff, but when you look even closer at the small things you just realise that there's a staggering diversity out there that we really know nothing about," he told AFP.

Papua New Guinea's jungles are one of just three wild rainforest areas, along with the [Amazon](#) and the Congo basin, left in the world and Richards said they were a vast "storehouse" of biodiversity, with scores of new species found by his Conservation International team.

The "very, very beautiful mouse", the two-centimetre (0.8 inch) long-snouted frog and another with bright yellow spots were among the highlights, but the expedition documented 100 new species in each of the spider and insect orders alone, he said.

"I would say that pretty much no matter where you go in New Guinea you're guaranteed to pick up new or poorly known spectacular species," said Richards, an expert in frogs and reptiles who is based in Cairns, Australia.



A species of montane mouse documented during the Rapid Assessment Program biodiversity survey in the Nakanai Mountains, Papua New Guinea in April 2009. The beautiful long-tailed mouse was captured at a high elevation site (1,590m above sea level). Scientists on October 6, 2010 unveiled a spectacular array of more than 200 new species discovered in the Pacific highlands of Papua New Guinea

"For some lesser known groups only half of the things that we document actually have names, we aren't even a fraction of the way there," he added.

The rugged, mountainous and largely inaccessible terrain meant biologists had not even been able to enter some regions and Richards said there were "large areas of New Guinea that are pretty much unexplored biologically".

Sample animals were taken of a number of species, including the mouse, and genetic testing had confirmed that it was not related to any known creature, he said.

"These kind of discoveries are almost kind of a good news story amongst all the gloom," he said, referring to the creeping extinction of other creatures.

"There really are spectacular species still out there and there really is a potential for things to survive."

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